Manchukuo

Manchukuo covers the three northeastern provinces of China, Fengtien, Kirin and Heilungkiang, plus Jehol province. It was formed in 1932 with the assistance of Japan. In 1945 when Japan surrendered to the Allies, the terms included the return of Manchukuo to China. The puppet state was dissolved.

THE FASCINATING STAMPS OF MANCHUKUO

by Michael Rogers

Bernardo Bertolucci's epic film *The Last Emperor* fueled renewed interest on the part of stamp collectors in the issues of Manchukuo.

Manchukuo, which issued stamps during 1932-45, has always been intriguing to collectors, considering its brief and eventful history.

The Japanese installed the last emperor of China, Henry Pu-Yi, as the chief executive to lend credibility to what was essentially a puppet state.

According to the Scott catalog there are only 169 stamps of Manchukuo to collect. However, because these stamps were issued under wartime conditions, errors and constant varieties abound. And since these stamps were largely produced to meet the needs of 43 million people, there are many postal markings as well.

China did not recognize Manchukuo's right to exist, nor did it honor Manchukuo postage stamps. Mail clerks obliterated the Manchukuo inscription on incoming mail. Under the 1934 Sino-Manchukuo Postal Agreement, it was agreed that incoming mail from Manchukuo to China would be franked by special "China Mail" postage stamps, which did not bear the name "Manchukuo."

Figure 1 shows one of these so-called Face-Saving stamps. The exotic central crest is that of a stylized orchid.

Just as Japan's imperial throne was presented by the chrysanthemum crest, the orchid crest symbolized Manchukuo's imperial throne. It is present on almost all of Manchukuo's stamps of 1934-45.

Eighteen stamps were issued on July 26, 1932, displaying either Pu-Yi's portrait or the White Pagoda at Liaoyang. Printed on unwatermarked white paper, they have a five-character "Manchu State Postal Administration" inscription. These definitives were heavily used, and a reissue was soon needed. A total of nine values were printed on watermarked granite paper. Because this second general issue was unannounced, collectors were not immediately aware of the change.

Figure 2 shows the 15-fen value of this second issue. It is Manchukuo's scarcest regularly issued postage stamp because only 100,000 were printed and because the 15f rate paid the parcel fee. Consequently, most 15f stamps were discarded on parcel wrappers received by non-collectors.

A four-value commemorative issue on March 1, 1993, honored the first anniversary of Manchukuo, and another the next year celebrated Pu-Yi's enthronement. These two issues were printed in sheetlets of 20, instead of the usual post office sheets of 100.

In 1934-35 four values were created by surcharging 4f and 16f issues. Among these, the 1f on 4f surcharge exists in a fairly scarce brown shade, the result of improper mixing of pigments.

Constant varieties are also avidly sought. Various fonts of type supplied the numeral surcharges and it is challenging to reconstruct the setting. Some types were printed only once in each sheet. Manchukuo's third general issue of 1934-36 was printed on watermarked granit paper. A six-character inscription on these stamps translates as "Manchu Empire Postal Administration."

Accompanying that issue, stamp booklets also appeared for the first time, as well as unissued 4f and 8f values that are sometimes found in postally used condition. The China Mail issue of 1935-37 saw considerable use and can form the basis of an interesting collection.

On April 2, 1935, a four-stamp set marked Emperor Kang Teh's visit to Tokyo was issued. Horizontal perforations vary from perf 11 to perf 12, and many compound perforation varieties and shades exist. The 18-value fourth general issue of 1936-37 included booklets of the 1 1/2f, 2f, 3f, and 4f values. Imperforate versions of several values were smuggled out the back door of the post office.

In order to accommodate new postal rates to China, nine surcharges appeared in 1937 on

various earlier China Mail stamps. These are far scarcer than the current market might suggest, especially when and if you can find them on commercial covers. During 1937-43, many patriotic commemoratives called for contribution to the war effort. Numerous varieties exist due to the poor wartime production control.

Manchukuo's Red Cross of 1943 was the subject of a private fund-raising booklet produced for presentation purposes. Towards the end of the war in 1944, 10f and 40f stamps were issued, each in two different designs, in a most unusual configuration. Horizontal rows of stamps were alternately printed in Japanese and Chinese. Imperforate-between varieties of these are well known. In addition, a 40f rounded corner variety came about during the repair of defective plates when a vignette was accidentally included in error on the wrong part of the printing plate. This variety is even found on the basic stamp used for postwar overprinting.

On May 2, 1945, the 10th anniversary of the emperor's edict, the last Manchukuo postage stamp was issued. It bears the imperial exhortation "One Heart, One Soul." Sometimes found imperforate, used stamps are elusive because the war ended for Manchukuo in August.

The Russians occupied North China in that month. Manchuria was returned to the Chinese in 1946. It had been intended that War Chest airmail semipostals be issued on September 20, 1945, but the few that survive were those looted from the Manchukuo Printing Bureau. These are in great demand, and the four values are known to bring auction prices in excess of $1,000.

A sampling from the 85 official government commemorative cancellations used during 1932-44 dresses up any Manchukuo collection. They may be found on postal stationery and souvenir booklets of postage stamps. Common commemorative themes are anniversaries, important national events such as the emperor's visit to Japan and military reviews.

A collection of Manchukuo need not be restricted to wartime issues. After the war ended, a great profusion of local overprints appeared on Manchukuo's stamps.

Figure 3 shows one of these Manchurian local overprints (MLOs). Although MLOs are frequently confused with other issues, they were prepared to provide usable postage stamps as soon as possible after Manchukuo's fall.

Thousands of MLOs are catalogued in Allen Kerr's *Local Overprinted Stamps of Manchuria*. The book is available from Asian specialist dealers.

Have we intrigued you with Manchukuo? You'll find no new issues, but there's enough specialized material to pursue to last a lifetime.

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Figure 1: When China refused to recognize stamps from Manchukuo, Manchukuo issued Orchid Crest Stamps like this one, bearing the inoffensive Chinese inscription "China Mail".

Figure 2: The last emperor of china, Henry Pu-Yi served as the head of the puppet state of Manchukuo during 1934-45. He appears on early stamps including this 1934 15f issue, Scott 30.

Figure 3: Following the war, stamps of Manchukuo received local overprints and were used as provisionals in Manchuria.

First Regular Issue
Unwatermarked white paper
Five characters in top panel read
"Manchu State Postal Administration"

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

First Anniversary Commemorative

Second Regular Issue
Granite paper and watermarked vertical wavy lines

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Enthronement of Emperor Commemorative

Black Surcharge on 1st and 2nd Regular Issues

Surcharge varieties of MK36

Upper left character of surcharge missing MK36a	Surcharge inverted MK36b	Surcharged in brown MK36c

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Third Regular Issue
granite paper watermarked Vertical Wavy Lines
Six characters in top panel read
"Manchu Empire Postal Administration"

Watermarked repeated seal type letters

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Third Regular Issue, prepared but not issued

8 Fen
Brownish Yellow

MKU1

First China Mail Issue
Lithographed on granite paper and watermarked horizontal wavy lines

Second China Mail Issue
Lithographed on granite paper and watermarked repeated seal type letters

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Third China Mail Issue
Engraved on granite paper and watermarked repeated seal type letters

Fourth China Mail Issue
Engraved on granite paper and watermarked repeated seal letters

Manchukuo Japan Postal Convention Commemorative

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

First Visit of Emperor to Japan Commemorative
Perforated 11

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Fourth Regular Issue
Granite paper and watermarked repeated seal letters

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Booklet panes of the fourth regular issue

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Booklet panes of the fourth regular issue

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Fifth Anniversary of Founding of Manchukuo

Wide space Surcharges on China Mail Issues
Space between vertical rows is 6.5mm

13 on 12 Fen
Red Orange
(on MK67)

MK103

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Narrow spaced surcharges on China Mail Issues
Space between vertical rows is 4.5mm

Vertical pair one without surcharge

Inverted surcharge

2 1/2 on 2 Fen

MK104a

2 1/2 on 2 Fen

MK104b

Broken top bar of Chinese character "5"

5 on 4 Fen

MK105a

5 on 4 Fen

MK106a

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Abolition of Extrality Rights Commemorative
Perforated 12 x 12 1/2

MK116a

MK113a

MK114a

MK115a

MK117a

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Perforated 13 x 13 1/2

Perforated 12 1/2 x 13

4 Fen
Green

MK113b

Perforated 13 1/2 x 13

10 Fen
Blue

MK115b

Perforated 13 1/2 x 13

Perforated 13 x 13 1/2

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Founding of Red Cross Society Commemorative

Completion of 10,000 Km. of Railways Commemorative

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Second Visit of Emperor to Japan Commemorative

National Census Commemorative

Green printing double

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2600th Anniversary of Founding of Japanese Empire Commemorative

Imperforate pair

4 Fen
Indigo

MK128a

Enactment of Conscription Law Commemorative

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Return of Singapore to Far East Commemorative Overprint
Overprint on 4th Regular Issue

Tenth Anniversary of Founding of Manchukuo Commemorative
Issued 1 March 1942

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Tenth Anniversary of Founding of Manchukuo Commemorative
Issued 15 September 1942

First Anniversary of Great East Asia War Commemorative
Overprint on 4th Regular Issue

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Proclamation of Labour Service Law Overprint
Overprinted on 4th Regular Issue

Fifth Anniversary of Red Cross Society Commemorative

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Second Anniversary of Great East Asia War Commemoritive

Fifth China Mail Issue

Imperforate pair

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Fifth Regular Issue

10th Anniversary of Emperor's Edict Commemorative

Imperforate pair

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

Propaganda for Japan and Manchukuo

Perforated 13 x 13 1/2

Imperforate Vertical Pairs

40 Fen
Gray Green

MK152a

40 Fen printed with the vignette of the 10 Fen

Perforated

MK152b

Imperforate

MK152c

Copyright MICHAEL ROGERS INC.

First Air Mail Issue

Second Air Mail Issue

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Thank you for taking a "tour" of
Manchukuo
with us. These album pages have been prepared with items from the APS Reference Collection.

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